

20 things we learned about democracy in January 2014

democraticaudit.com/2014/01/31/18-things-we-learned-about-democracy-this-month/

By Democratic Audit UK

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The first month of what promises to be a momentous year for UK democracy has produced more than a few surprising revelations. In this post Democratic Audit looks back at the insights we have gleaned in the past 31 days, ranging from parliamentary mothers and unfree information to honourable barbers and the end of libel tourism.



The new year's honours list released this month included some surprising recipients. Credit: [Paul-W](#) (CC BY-NC-SA)

1. 45% of female MPs have no children, compared to 28% of male MPs. Those MPs who are mothers tend to have fewer children than their male counterparts, and to enter Parliament when their children are older. [Find out more here.](#)
2. Endless reform of patient and public involvement structures in the NHS undermines the ability of local communities to influence the provision of health services. [Find out more here.](#)
3. You can get an MBE for services to hairdressing. It probably helps if you happen to be the Prime Minister's barber. [Find out more here.](#)
4. 44% of academics giving evidence at select committee hearings are based at London universities. [Find out more here.](#)
5. Party supporters – as opposed to members – play a much more significant role as election campaign volunteers than previously recognised. [Find out more here.](#)
6. Leading democracy and security experts are largely in agreement that the UK needs stronger parliamentary oversight of our intelligence services. [Find out more here.](#)
7. The difference in the voting rates of young people and older people is significantly higher in the UK (38

percentage points) than any other country in the OECD. [Find out more here.](#)

8. MPs can take a sword through the division lobby in the House of Commons, but not a baby. [Find out more here.](#)

9. The Mayor of London thinks it 'perfectly acceptable' for television dramas to mock politicians, himself included. [Find out more here.](#)

10. Daily attendance by Members of the House of Lords has increased 25% in recent years, from a daily average of 388 in 2009/10 to 484 in 2012/13. [Find out more here.](#)



Is this man going to be your next MEP?

11. 75% of witnesses appearing at select committee hearings are men. [Find out more here.](#)

12. People who perceive themselves as being ideologically distant from the major political parties tend to be less satisfied with the state of democracy. [Find out more here.](#)

13. In contrast to Russell Brand, some comedians clearly think voting is worthwhile – particularly Rufus Hound, who has announced his intention to stand in the European Parliament elections this year. [Find out more here.](#)

14. In international rankings of parliamentary websites, the UK scores 7 out of 12 for the quality of information it provides to citizens – Germany and Singapore rank the highest. [Find out more here.](#)

15. London's reputation as the global capital of 'libel tourism' may be about to come to an end, following the introduction of the Defamation Act. [Find out more](#)

[here.](#)

16. One popular pornography website receives 79 times more views annually from UK residents than the government's Gov.uk homepage. [Find out more here.](#)

17. Black, Asian or minority ethnic candidates for Westminster continue to suffer electorally from ethnic and religious prejudice – incumbents tend to perform better if running against a minority candidate. [Find out more here.](#)

18. Citizens' rights to obtain information from public bodies under the Freedom of Information Act are being subtly eroded. [Find out more here.](#)

19. No woman has been selected as a parliamentary candidate in a Labour Party target seat without the use of all-women shortlist since the last general election. [Find out more here.](#)

20. The largest all-party group (APPG) in Parliament, with over 300 members, is the APPG for Beer. [Find out more here.](#)

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Note: This post does not give the position of Democratic Audit or



Who does Keith Vaz want to hear from?



David Cameron recruiting a new member for the APPG.

the London School of Economics. Please read our [comments policy](#) before commenting. Shortlink for this post: buff.ly/1f11JMJ

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